

AGENDA ITEM III

PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM

NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN HERITAGE RESOURCES

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Consequent to low-completer review, the University proposed to convert its Master's program in History to a Master's program in Heritage Resources. The Board of Regents granted conditional approval of that proposed program on August 28, 2003. Subsequent progress reports by the University were considered by the Board, which permitted the University to implement the program in Fall 2005.

The current proposal is for a program in Heritage Resources at the baccalaureate level. Among other uses, the program would serve as a feeder program from the M.A. in Heritage Resources. It would also replace the B.A. in Anthropology, due to phase out (consequent to low-completer review) in the next two years.

STAFF ANALYSIS

1. Description/Curriculum

"Heritage resources" are cultural materials associated with particular communities: they can be physical (artifacts, archival records, buildings, archaeological sites) or intangible (cultural traditions, languages/dialects, songs, dances, culinary practices).

Graduates will be prepared to work with these materials at the entry-level in such agencies and organizations as: U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, federally-acknowledged Native American tribes, Office of State Parks, Louisiana Army National Guard, Archaeology firms in Louisiana, the Louisiana Folklife Center, Creole Heritage Center, and similar entities. The University has placed graduates of its Anthropology and Social Sciences programs in all the above. Graduates will also be prepared for graduate study in the area.

The curriculum is multi-disciplinary, drawing on coursework in Anthropology, Geography (including GIS technology), and Historic Preservation. Along with the University's general education requirements (44 hrs.), the program comprises a common core of major coursework (33 hrs.), a chosen area of concentration in one of the above-mentioned areas (27 hrs.), a foreign language component (6 hrs.) and free electives (15 hrs.). Total hours: 123. Interdisciplinary relationships will be explored in depth during the introductory survey, the junior seminar, and the senior Field School experience, which is a semester-long engagement with a heritage site resulting in a capstone paper.

Internships are available and optional. The curriculum is aligned with the University's master's program in the same area.

The staff expressed concerns about the nature of the Field School experience. The University responded as follows:

We have rethought this course. [...] The Heritage Resources Field School will be a team-taught, intensive, semester-long engagement with a heritage site, exploring the peoples, places, and past events that make that site significant. The Field School will have a prerequisite of one methods class from Geography, Anthropology, or Historic Preservation. This will ensure that the student will begin the class with an understanding of field work. [...] The field school is envisioned as the culmination of the student's experience in drawing together the disciplines of Anthropology, Geography, and Historic Preservation in the full understanding of the peoples, places, and the past associated with a relevant heritage question.

2. Need

No public universities in Louisiana currently offer a similar program. Very few universities anywhere in the U.S. offer a program of this particular kind. One can find programs in Historic Preservation, but they are almost always technical in nature. One can also find "cultural studies" programs, but they are almost always academic/philosophical. The proposed program seeks to balance the two approaches. In large part, this design derives from the University's interview of twelve board members from the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and other members of the cultural resource management field. Many of them strongly agreed that a blend of practical and academic training would be most desirable and marketable. Given the University's past success at placing graduates of its Anthropology and Social Sciences programs in a large number of national, state, and local agencies/organizations, the University claims that the proposed program will simply fill the needs of these entities at the national, state, and local level better.

3. Students

Because this program will replace the University's B.A. in Anthropology and represent a balanced approach to cultural resource study and management, the University expects that the program will draw students from a variety of social science programs; it also expects to draw upon a national pool. Estimates are as follows:

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Enrolled	37	42	49	54	54
Graduates	-	10	11	12	12

The University plans to advertise the program nationally and apply for the program's entry into the SREB Academic Common Market, which will further increase its visibility.

4. Faculty

Nine full-time faculty representing all three areas of concentration will be associated directly with the program. Three are full professors; the remaining are assistant (non-tenured) professors. Nearly every faculty member is associated in some formal, established way with cultural resource management agencies and organizations such as the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT); the Creole Heritage Center; the Louisiana Regional Folklife Program; the State Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism; etc. Several are state-designated archaeologists for specific state regions.

The default faculty teaching load is 15 hours per semester; several of the faculty associated with this program receive load reductions for administrative work and liaison duties with various organizations. Three faculty (one from each concentration area) will be designated as student advisors, and students will be assigned to them based on their chosen concentrations.

The student-to-faculty ratio in Anthropology and Geography are high (156:1 and 82:1, respectively); these figures reflect the existence of large lectures at the introductory level.

The University states that no new faculty positions are required to initiate the program.

5. Library

In addition to maintaining the usual resources and network connections (OCLC, LOUIS, etc.), the University is in the process of expanding its library holdings to support its new graduate program in Heritage Resources. One of the aspects of that expansion plan was to support a baccalaureate program in the area as well. The NCPTT has its own library and a preservation archive on campus as well, available for student use. The University budgets \$1500.00 per year for acquisitions in Heritage Resources and states that “no additional categories of resources are needed to support this [baccalaureate] program.”

6. Facilities/Equipment

The University reports that it has no need for additional classroom and laboratory resources for this program. Facilities directly related to the program are as follows:

- Cultural Resource Office
- Anthropological and Archaeological Training Laboratory
- Louisiana Creole Heritage Center
- Williamson Museum
- Cammie G. Henry Research Center
- Regional Archaeology Program
- Station Archaeology Program
- Louisiana Regional Folklife Program
- Archaeological Conservation Initiative
- Zooarchaeology Initiative
- Southern Studies (interdisciplinary journal)

Detailed descriptions of each facility, including descriptions of GIS instruments available for use, were included in the proposal. In addition, the University has cooperative agreements and/or internship agreements with all of the following organizations:

- National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT)
- Cane River Creole National Historical Park (with two plantations)
- Cane River National Heritage Area
- U.S. Forest Service (Kisatchie National Forest)

The University states that no new facilities are needed for this program. It should be mentioned that no other university in the nation has a National Center for Preservation Technology and Training located on its campus.

As for equipment, the University's Cultural Resource Office has the necessary GIS equipment and laboratory workstations for student use, and these mirror the equipment and data at the NCPTT. A fully-fledged GIS laboratory is being developed to support Heritage Resources programs directly; the University reports that it is pursuing external grants to develop this additional resource.

7. Administration

The program will be administered by a tenured professor in Geography, who will report to the Acting Director of the School of Social Sciences. The administrative structure of the institution will not otherwise be affected.

8. Accreditation

There is no national accrediting agency for this program, but the National Council for Preservation Education issues guidelines and serves as a means of advertising the program. The University plans to apply for membership.

9. Budget

The program will be housed in the Department of Social Sciences and be part of its overall budget, which averages roughly \$1.2M per year. Nearly all of the budget represents salary expenditures; approximately \$21,000 per year is spent on operating (travel, supplies, operating services) expenses.

The University states that "the new program will not affect allocation of funds other than basic supply costs, which the Department of Social Sciences is willing to absorb."

STAFF SUMMARY

This is a well-designed curriculum that is responsive to the demands of its associated profession. The University has responded appropriately to all concerns of in-state reviewers and staff. The curriculum is largely multi-disciplinary, a design which risks fragmenting the student's development, but the University has developed clear points at which interdisciplinary training can occur. Need for such a program is evident; in many respects, it is clearly opportune. Student interest is likely; the University has clear plans for its advertisement. No new faculty are needed. Library resources are adequate for implementation. Facilities are excellent; the addition of a GIS laboratory specifically for Heritage Resources would enhance the program. Administrative and budgetary impacts are minimal.

The staff notes that the program will replace the B.A. in Anthropology, which will be phased out in two years. The staff therefore recommends that the University file a progress report regarding the new program's enrollment by October 1, 2006.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic And Student Affairs Committee grant conditional approval for the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Heritage Resources program (CIP 30.1202) at Northwestern State University, effective Fall 2005. By October 1, 2006, the University shall submit a report to the Commissioner of Higher Education documenting numbers of students enrolled in the program.